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NBC -- MEET THE PRESS

30 June 1985

Correspondents: Marvin Kalb, Garrick Utley.
Subject: Beirut Hostage Crisis

Guest: Jeane Kirkpatrick

Kalb: What would be the likely Israeli reaction?

Kirkpatrick: The Israeli government will be enormously relieved that the hostages are in fact released and safely out of Beirut and their captors' hands....The Israeli government is confronted with an interesting question -- how to prevent the hijacking from changing the course they had already decided on....

Utley: How would you describe the state of relations between the U.S. and Israel?

Kirkpatrick: I think the state of relations is excellent. I don't think that the misunderstanding has really existed between the two governments.

Kalb: (How do you feel) about a good will gesture for the Israeli government?

Kirkpatrick: (This crisis) was an unprovoked act and nobody ought to provide any sort of good will gestures to anyone who has been involved in that kidnapping and hijacking. That is not an appropriate basis for good will gestures. I think the Israeli government can perfectly appropriately release those prisoners as they always intended to do.

Utley: What do you think about retaliation?

Kirkpatrick: I do not think that's an appropriate subject for discussion at this point.

Utley: What should be the proper course of action in the future?

Kirkpatrick: The appropriate course of action is to take a good many determined preventive actions to make as sure as we humanly can that Americans will not be hijacked and American carriers will be safe, and to make that compulsory, really, and also to make very clear to everyone in the world that the United States does not submit to blackmail and does not accept mistreatment of American citizens lightly. We cannot and we do not, as the President has made clear.

Guests: Senator Patrick Leahy and Samuel Lewis.

Kalb: Is there a need for emergency legislation to provide the funding to protect U.S. embassies and installations all over the world?

Leahy: I think there is a need to protect the installations, and especially in some of the obvious critical places. I think there's even a greater need, though, to improve our intelligence and to be able to alert ourselves to when these terrorist attacks are going to happen and to be able to try to stop them before they happen.

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MEET THE PRESS (continued)

Utley: How good is our intelligence in the Middle East?

Leahy: I think it is getting better. It is still behind where it should be but it is improving.

Utley: This whole hostage affair has now been resolved within about two weeks. Was this perhaps unusual?

Lewis: ...Certainly the fact that the Israeli government had long planned to release these detainees as soon as the situation in South Lebanon calmed down, and they'd brought no charges against any of them, and had announced it publicly, made it manageable in a way that other such crises have not been.

Kalb: What is really going on?

Lewis: ...Certainly, there are tacit understandings between good and close friendly governments like Israel and the U.S. which don't lend themselves to being announced as agreements, and there are a lot of informal channels that governments can talk to each other through at high levels without it becoming a formal, public exchange.

Kalb: Can we get (the seven other Americans) back?

Leahy: ...President Assad could if he wanted to expend the political capital, or whatever, bring enough pressure to release them, and the question is whether he will.

Lewis: I think there's a complicated problem for Assad because of his relationship with Iran and the lack of direct control over the precise captors of these people, but the area they're in certainly is under the control of Syrian forces. It's risky to try to get them out by military means for him; they could be killed in the process. But I believe that if Assad expends enough political pressure on the Hezbollah, he'll get them.

Utley: What are the real dangers that this terrorism could come into the United States and happen here?

Leahy: The danger's almost overwhelming that it will come to the United States and will happen here....And we have to take steps. We have to improve the counter-terrorism abilities of the FBI...because as we bring pressure in the Middle East -- and we have to bring pressure against these terrorists -- we have to be able to strike at them before they strike at us. But as we do that, they're going to increase their efforts to export it to the United States, we're going to face it, and we've got to be a lot better prepared than we are today.

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